HOW TO FIT IN:
NAMING STRATEGIES AMONG
FOREIGN RESIDENTS OF JAPAN

Giancarla Unser-Schutz
Rissho University

Overview: Adaptation and Names

Names are generally felt to be special kinds of words, and are commonly perceived to be part of one's unique self.[1] Because names are culturally and socially situated, moving to a new society with different naming practices may require individuals to make decisions about presenting their names, and consequently, their identities. While names provide important information about one's ethnicity or geographical origin, through either legal or personal processes of adaption "…they may also provide the vehicle for crossing boundaries between those very same categories."[2] Previous research on immigrants in the United States and Canada has shown that such adaptations are complex and fluid, with people's negotiations differing by historical moment. As Alatis and Klymasz describe, there has been a history of adapting names amongst Greek and Slavic immigrants, with Anglicization common.[3] However, these assimilatory patterns seem to fade as societies become more accepting of multiculturalism. Although historically there was pressure for Asian immigrants and their descendants to assimilate through the selection of Anglicized personal names, with more

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[1] Kenneth L. Dion, "Names, Identity, and Self," *Names* 31/4 (1983): 245–257.

[2] Barbara Bodenhorn and Gabriele vom Bruck. "'Entangled in Histories': An Introduction to the Anthropology of Names and Naming," in Gabriele vom Bruck and Barbara Bodenhorn, eds., *An Anthropology of Names and Naming* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.

[3] James E. Alatis, "The Americanization of Greek Names," *Names* 3/3 (1955): 137–156; Robert Klymasz, "The Canadianization of Slavic Surnames; a Study in Language Contact Part I," *Names* 11/2 (1963): 81–105; Robert Klymasz, "The Canadianization of Slavic Surnames; a Study in Language Contact Part II," *Names* 11/3 (1963): 182–195; Robert Klymasz, "The Canadianization of Slavic Surnames; a Study in Language Contact Part III," *Names* 11/4 (1963): 229–253.

Asian immigrants and the Asian-American movement, Asian-Americans have increasingly chosen to use ethnic names, suggesting that American society is becoming more welcome to multiculturalism.[4]

The right – or lack thereof – to control one's name is also a crucial part of maintaining autonomy over one's identity; as Bodenhorn and Bruck write, "[t]o the extent that people are able to negotiate their social relations through their own decisions concerning which names – and persons – are to potentiate those relations, naming is often about agency."[5] Additionally, individuals' own attitudes and their homelands' naming practices can influence which strategies are more appealing. Kim found that for Korean students in Toronto, choosing to Anglicize one's name was dependent on one's sense of habitus in regards to Korea, with those maintaining stronger ties or seeing less need to forge Canadian roots less likely to adapt their names.[6] On the other hand, in a survey of Japanese, Korean and Chinese (speaking) individuals living in Toronto, Heffernan found that although Japanese people tend not to change names, the other two groups tend to adopt English personal names.[7] Even within Chinese-speaking groups, however, how individuals chose English names differed upon where they were originally from, leading him to argue that such changes were not motivated by simply pragmatic issues (e.g., ease of pronunciation), but also cultural differences.

In societies historically less multicultural than the U.S. or Canada, one might suppose that pressures to adapt one's name to integrate into society work differently. One such comparatively homogenous society would be Japan. Although a large body of research shows that homogenous Japan is a myth,[8] the number of foreign residents in Japan is nonetheless relatively low.

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[4] Ellen Dionne Wu, "'They Call Me Bruce, But They Won't Call Me Bruce Jones': Asian American Naming Preferences and Patterns," *Names* 47/1 (1999): 21–50.

[5] Bodenhorn and vom Bruck, "'Entangled in Histories,'" 27.

[6] Tae-Young Kim, "The Dynamics of Ethnic Name Maintenance and Change: Cases of Korean ESL Immigrants in Toronto," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 28/2 (2007): 117–33.

[7] Kevin Heffernan, "English Name Use by East Asians in Canada: Linguistic Pragmatics or Cultural Identity?" *Names* 58/1 (2010): 24–36.

[8] See Mike Douglass and Glenda Susan Roberts. *Japan and Global Migration: Foreign Workers and the Advent of a Multicultural Society*

In December 2015, the number of mid- to long-term foreigners in Japan was 1,883,563 with permanent residents accounting for 37.19% (Ministry of Justice 2015).[9]

Moreover, the number of special permanent residents was 348,626 – these are individuals of primarily Korean or Taiwanese heritage who remained in Japan after WWII but whose citizenship was reverted to that of their ancestral country, often called *zainichi* – bringing the total to 2,232,189 (approximately 2% of the current population). This total is miniscule compared with the approximately 13% foreign-born population of the U.S. in the 2010 census, and somewhat less than 44% of those who are naturalized.[10]

Research on naming practices amongst foreigners in Japan has generally focused on specific groups with unique situations. Kim observed that *zainichi* Koreans have been using Korean names more actively recently to create a sense of ethnicity, suggesting changes in how names are approached.[11] However, names can represent larger problems for foreigners in Japan. Hatano analysed how Brazilian and Peruvian *nikkei* (people of Japanese heritage) children's names are registered in public schools, arguing that because it is done unsystematically, problems such as children not knowing their legal names can arise, leading Hatano to press for more consideration of their human rights. Yet, both cases are unique. *Zainichi*

(Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2003); John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Michael Weiner, Michael, ed., *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity* (London: Routledge, 2008).

[9] Ministry of Justice, "Kokuseki/chi'iki betsu zairyū-shikaku-(zairyū-mokuteki)-betsu sō-zairyū gaikokujin," E-Stat, December 2015 (accessed March 23, 2018, http://www.e-stat.go.jp/SG1/estat/GL0202010 1.do?metho d=xlsDownload&fileId=000007481093&releaseCount=1).

[10] Elizabeth M. Grieco, Yesenia D. Acosta, G. Patricia de la Cruz, Christine Gambino, Thomas Gryn, Luke J., Larsen, Edward N. Trevelyan, and Nathan P. Walters, "The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2010," United States Census Bureau, May 2012 (accessed July 15, 2018, https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2012/acs/acs-19.html).

[11] Taeyoung Kim, "'Identity Politics' and Korean Youth in Japan: A Case Study of a Junior High School Student," *International Education Journal* 3/5 (2002): 56–63.

Koreans are generally not newcomers but rather were born in Japan with little personal experiences in South or North Korea, and *nikkei*, while generally born abroad and often of mixed heritage, have some claim to Japanese ethnic roots; both groups are also treated differently in the immigration process.[12]

Today, there are many different groups living in Japan, from English-language teachers from the U.S. and Canada to refugees from Vietnam and Laos as well as trainees from countries as varied as Bangladesh and the Philippines. Although their experiences have been less frequently covered in the previous research, their diverse circumstances may lead to different strategies. Related research on how Japanese negotiate addressing foreigners paints a complicated picture. Looking at how foreigners were addressed on Japanese television, Maeda found that although it is polite practice in Japanese to refer to people one does not know well using their surname and the honorific suffix *–san*, it is common to refer to foreigners using personal names only, even in contexts where that would be rude.[13] Maeda argues that this is the result of a common belief that foreigners prefer personal names, but as her research suggests, there is a great deal of uncertainty in how to call foreigners, both in terms of address and names more generally.[14]

Names, Identity and Immigration

Historically, Japanese names have been used to both differentiate and assimilate others. Indeed, the newly placed importance of Korean names described above may partly result from the historical pressures that Koreans were subjected to during the colonial period (1910–1945). While Koreans were first banned from using Japanese names in 1911, the law was changed in 1939 to require the registration of a family name. For a fee, one could choose a Japanese surname and change one's personal name to match (otherwise, one's Korean name was automatically registered). This was presented as an opportunity to select Japanese names, yet it has been

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[12] Hatano Lilian Terumi, *Mainoriti No Namae Wa Dono Yō Ni Atsukawareteiru No Ka: Nihon No Kōritsu Gakkō Ni Okeru Nyūkamā No Ba'ai* (Tokyo: Hituzi-shobo, 2008), 25–30.

[13] Margaret Maeda, "How the Japanese Address and Refer to Non-Japanese: A Survey of Usages on Japanese Television," *Kanagawa Daigaku Gengo Kenkyū* 25 (2002): 139–62.

[14] Ibid., 160–161.

interpreted as an attempt to weaken the traditional patriarchal family system of Korea, breeding loyalty to the Japanese emperor.[15]Using Gerhards and Hans's terms, the use of Japanese names amongst Koreans could thus be called a case of *forced acculturation*.[16] Even today, many choose to use Japanese *tsūmei* – names registered at city office and used in daily life in place of one's legal name – to avoid prejudice because of their Korean heritage.[17]

Another important example is the people of Amami and the Ryukyu islands, a series of small chains stretching towards Taiwan. Despite forming a larger cultural-linguistic area, since Amami is situated relatively close to Kagoshima, Amami differs in many respects from the southern Ryukyus, or present-day Okinawa. Historically, Okinawa existed as the independent Ryukyu kingdom, but in 1609, it was made a vassal state of the former Satsuma clan of Kagoshima. The Satsuma clan banned the use of Japanese names in 1624 in the Ryukyu kingdom, and from 1783 in Amami, permitted only one-*kanji* (Chinese characters adapted for use in the Japanese language) surnames, which differs from most Japanese names, most of which are two *kanji* long.[18] Following Gerhards and Hans, one could describe the forced non-use of Japanese names in Amami and the Ryukyus as cases of *forced segregation*.[19] Yet these policies later reversed course completely, when their relationship within Japan changed again: being annexed formally into Japan in 1879 lead to their having to take Japanese names – particularly from 1911 to 1926, when it was conducted forcibly.[20]

In these cases, Japanese names were used to assimilate *and* differentiate populations, strategically locating names as an important part of

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[15] Mizuno Naoki. *Sōshi Kaimei: Nihon no Chōsen Shihai no Naka de* (Tokyo: Iwanami-shoten, 2008), 50.

[16] Jürgen Gerhards and Silke Hans, "From Hasan to Herbert: Name-Giving Patterns of Immigrant Parents between Acculturation and Ethnic Maintenance," *American Journal of Sociology* 114/4 (2009): 1102–1128.

[17] See Taeyoung Kim, "'Identity Politics,'" for an enlightening case study.

[18] "Amami Studies" Publishing Group, Amami-gaku: Sono Chihei to Kanata (Kagoshima, Japan: Nanpōshinsha, 2005).

[19] Gerhards and Hans, "From Hasan to Herbert," 1103.

[20] Koji Taira, "Troubled National Identity: The Ryukyuans/Okinawans," in Michael Weiner, ed., *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity* (London: Routledge, 1997), 140–77.

a supposed Japanese identity. Which pattern is more likely today depends on how non-Japanese residents are viewed. As regards this, Japan currently has what is describable as a non-immigration oriented system of absorbing foreign nationals. Instead, "...foreigners have been regarded as people to be controlled and monitored rather than as equal contributors in Japanese society."[21]

For many foreigners living in Japan, one's long term status can seem precarious. While all workers must have health insurance and enter the pension system, there is no equivalent to U.S. green card lotteries. To apply for permanent residency, one must be in Japan for more than ten years, five of which must be on a work or spousal visa. One must also have received the longest work or spousal visa available and have had the visa expired and renewed at least once. (Highly skilled workers or those married to Japanese are sometimes exempted from the ten-year rule). The maximum terms were previously three years for spousal and work visas, but were extended to five in 2012, leading to concerns that permanent residency applications may take even longer.[22] Even with permanent residency, one's rights can be uncertain. In 2014, the Supreme Court of Japan ruled that non-naturalized foreigners are not automatically entitled to receive welfare benefits, leaving it to the discretion of local governments.[23] Although the Anglicization of names has been one way that some immigrants to the U.S. signify their adoption of a new national identity,[24] making it a case of Gerhard and Hans's *voluntary acculturation*,[25] one would not expect it in Japan. Instead, the precariousness

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[21] Hiroshi Komai, "Immigrants in Japan," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 9/3 (2000), 322.

[22] Saitō Yoshifumi, "*Hōmushō Nyūkoku-Kanrikyoku 'Zairyū Kikan 5nen Wo Kettei Suru Sai No Kangaekata (An)' Ni Kansuru Kaichō Seimei*," Tokyo Bar Association, June 15, 2012 (accessed January 27, 2018, http://www.toben.or.jp/message/seimei/5.html).

[23] Tomohiro Osaki, "Welfare Ruling Stuns Foreigners," *The Japan Times*, July 19, 2014 (accessed March 23, 2018, http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/07/19/national/social-issues/welfare-ruling-stuns-for eigners/).

[24] See for example Chang-rae Lee's essay excerpt in Linda Watkins-Goffman, *Lives in Two Languages: An Exploration of Identity and Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 89–91.

[25] Gerhards and Hans. "From Hasan to Herbert," 1103.

of even long-term foreign residents' status suggests that they are not likely to adopt Japanese identities through names, nor to feel that Japanese names, so clearly delineated as a part of Japanese identity, are available to them.

The Registration of Names

This does not mean that people do nothing at all; rather, the changes are different from simply adopting a Japanese name. Indeed, the legal process of registering as a foreign resident can force some changes. Any foreigner residing in Japan for a stay exceeding three months is required to register with the government and receive a *zairyū-kādo* (resident card). Registration must use the Roman alphabet (*rōmaji*); interestingly, naturalization requires the use of the Japanese syllabaries and/or *kanji*, but no *rōmaji*, thus delineating foreigners' names as non-Japanese. The *rōmaji* used must follow one's passport, which can lead to some confusion: For example, middle names not used in everyday life are also included on resident cards if they are on one's passport. There are, however, differences in how foreigners from *kanji* cultures (countries where *kanji* are used: China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong) and non-*kanji* cultures are registered.

In addition to Romanized versions, individuals with *kanji* names can also formally register them.[26] While modern Japanese does not use all the ideographs found in Chinese, many are shared, have substitute forms, or are related to *kanji* found in Japanese. This allows for many names to be read using their Japanese pronunciations, while still maintaining their original written form – a common way to deal with Chinese names.[27]

People whose native languages do not use ideographs have no choice but to register their name exclusively in *rōmaji*, whether their language uses *rōmaji*, Cyrillic or other systems. Although most Japanese study English at school starting in the fifth grade and learn *rōmaji* from the third grade, such knowledge can be unhelpful when encountering *rōmaji* names. Firstly, names from languages Japanese people are less familiar with remain opaque, even if they use the Roman alphabet. As Hatano notes, the most common explanation by educators for the misregistration of South American *nikkei* children's names at school is that "they just don't know

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[26] Ministry of Justice, "Zairyū kādo mata wa tokubetsu eijūsha shōmeisho no shimei no kanji hyōki ni tsuite," Immigration Bureau of Japan, May 7, 2012 (accessed May 27, 2018, http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/topics/kanji_kokuji .pdf).

[27] Hatano, Mainoriti No Namae, 80–81.

anything about foreigners' names."[28] Secondly, even names from English may not be clear, given the notorious lack of transparency of English orthography.[29] Thirdly, because *rōmaji* is studied within a Japanese context, children learn how *rōmaji* can be used to write Japanese, resulting in a tendency to use the same rules of reading non-Japanese words as they would for Romanized Japanese, leading to discrepancies.[30]

One may achieve some phonetic transparency by registering one's names in *katakana*, a Japanese syllabary used to write loan words; however, because *katakana* is adapted specifically for Japanese, non-Japanese words are phonologically transformed when written in *katakana*. Although it was previously not required, with the introduction of the My Number identification system in 2015, all individuals – including Japanese – living in Japan now have a phonetic *katakana* version of their name registered, making it essentially universal.[31] However, situations requiring *katakana* names are not new. They include creating bank accounts, where one's name is written in both *rōmaji* and *katakana*; or registering one's personal seal (*jitsuin*), used when applying for loans or declaring taxes. Seals are also required in many everyday situations, such as clocking in at work.

Linguistic Issues

Even talking to someone Japanese in one's native language may require accepting some change given different pronunciations due to first-language interference. Many social situations make a *katakana* version desirable or convenient; if one is talking in Japanese, names will also be

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[28] Ibid., 184.

[29] See Charles A. Perfetti and Ying Liu, "Orthography to Phonology and Meaning: Comparisons Across and within Writing Systems," *Reading and Writing* 18/ 3 (2005): 193–210 on transparency and writing systems.

[30] Hatano, Mainoriti No Namae, 100.

[31] For information on the new system see The Japan Agency for Local Authority Information Systems, "Website for the Individual Number Card / Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)," Individual Number Card, July 14, 2016 (accessed August 8, 2018, https://www.kojinbango-card.go.jp/en/faq/index.html); for criticisms, see Martin King, "'My Number' System: A Worrying Glimpse of the Future," Japan Today, October 1, 2015 (accessed March 23, 2018, http://www.japantoday.com/category/opinions/view/my-number-system-a-worrying-glimpse-of-the-future).

adapted to Japanese phonology. Because Japanese has a relatively small suite of phonemes, this can mean dramatic changes in pronunciation. Japanese features five phonemic vowels and 13 phonemic consonants, limited in comparison with English's nine vowels and 24 consonants, or Mandarin Chinese's five vowels and 23 consonants. Japanese syllable structure is rigid, requiring most syllables to be open (i.e., end with a vowel) with the exception of some geminates and /n/. All foreign words borrowed into Japanese must be adjusted to fit these constraints.
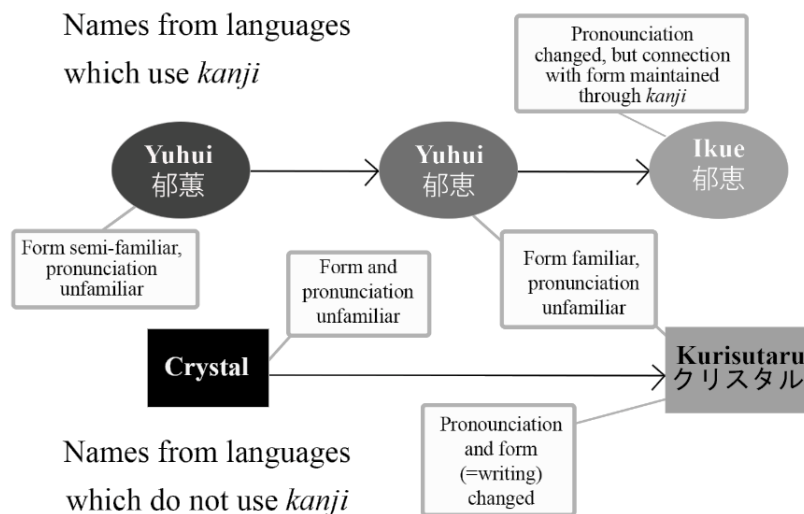
Names from languages which use *kanji*

Pronounciation changed, but connection with form maintained through *kanji*

Yuhui 郁蕙

Yuhui 郁恵

Ikue 郁恵

Form semi-familiar, pronunciation unfamiliar

Form and pronunciation unfamiliar

Form familiar, pronunciation unfamiliar

Crystal

Kurisutaru クリスタル

Names from languages which do not use *kanji*

Pronounciation and form (=writing) changed

Figure 1. Ways to adapt names from cultures where the language uses *kanji* and from cultures where the language does not use *kanji*

Take the English name *Crystal*, normally pronounced /krɪstl/ or /krɪstəl/, with two consonant clusters and, depending on the speaker, a syllabic /l/, all of which are impermissible in Japanese. It also includes two difficult sounds for Japanese speakers: /r/ and /l/, neither of which are used in Japanese, which only has the flap /ɾ/. Japanese speakers encountering the

name *Crystal* are likely to adjust and insert vowels and replace both the /r/ and the /l/ with a flap, leading to [kɯɾisɯtaɾɯ]. Naturally, Japanese phonology also affects Japanese native speakers' pronunciations of words while speaking foreign languages, resulting in the typical Japanese accent, such as the tendency to add vowels at the end of closed syllables.[32]

The strategies available to people also differ by their language and cultural background. Specifically, names from *kanji* and non-*kanji* cultures can be adapted into Japanese in two very different ways, demonstrated in Figure 1. The female Chinese name '郁蕙' *Yuhui* is substituted with '郁恵', as '蕙' is not used in Japanese, but is homophonic with the very similar '恵'. The reading *Yuhui* is then substituted for the Japanese readings of the kanji, *Ikue*, which maintains a connection to its original written form, while still adapting to Japanese. In comparison, the female English name *Crystal* /krɪstl/ must be written in *katakana* as 'クリスタル' – [kɯɾisɯtaɾɯ] – to command a similar level of readability, representing a double departure: both of these sound very different from their original pronunciations, but whereas the Japanese-illiterate Chinese speaker might still recognize '郁恵' as their name, the Japanese-illiterate English speaker would not likely recognize 'クリスタル'.

The Study and Methodology

As these points make clear, social and legal circumstances may cause foreigners in Japan to alter their names, but these changes may be both subtle and unconscious. It is possible that people do not perceive these as changes; if they do, how do they manage and negotiate them? The non-immigration oriented system and special status of names as symbols of Japanese identity also suggests that Japanese names may not seem as available to foreigners, as compared with Anglo names in countries like the U.S. or Canada.

To start the exploration of these issues, I conducted a survey of foreigners in Japan, from the fall of 2012 through the summer of 2013, first reported on in the author's 2014 article.[33]

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[32] T. J. Riney and Janet Anderson-Hsieh, "Japanese Pronunciation of English," *JALT Journal* 15/1 (1993): 21–36.

[33] Giancarla Unser-Schutz, "The Use and Non-Use of Japanese Names by Non-Japanese," *Names* 62/4(2014): 202–213.

Number of countries		Participants			Chinese speakers		English speakers	
		Female	Male	Total				
28		85	53	138	China	23	Australia	5
	USA	24	18	42	Hong Kong	2	Canada	12
Top 3	China	12	11	23	Taiwan	3	Ireland	1
	Canada	9	3	12			New Zealand	2
							UK	12
							USA	42
				Total		*28*		*74*

Table 1. Major home countries and native languages of participants

Japanese language level	Number of participants	Responded in English	Survey language	Number of participants
None	1	1	English	106
A little (greetings, etc.)	18	17	Japanese	32
Conversational (can hold basic conversations with friends)	69	49	By Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese) native speakers	26
Business (can conduct high-level business matters)	39	31	*Total*	*138*
Native/near-native	11	8		

Table 2. Participants' self-reported Japanese language ability[34]

  The survey was conducted using Google Form, in English and Japanese. To maximize potential participants, I targeted non-Japanese people living in Japan or who had lived there, not taking into consideration age, gender, ethnicity or nationality. The survey consisted of 36 questions, including 13 background questions and 23 name-related questions, and were a combination of selection, Likert-like ratings, and free-response questions. The survey garnered 138 replies, using a snowball approach to participant recruitment. While respondents were from 28 different countries, Americans consisted of about one-third (30.44%) of the total, with the majority from European language blocks, likely due in part to the languages of the survey (Table 1); there were also more female respondents (61.59%). At 86.23%,

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[34] Adapted from Unser-Schutz, "The Use and Non-Use of Japanese Names."

the majority of participants had at least conversational Japanese speaking skills (Table 2). The average length of time lived in Japan was 7.60 years (*SD*=7.37), with a range of 1 to 41 years.

Following issues brought up in Hatano, Kim, and Wu, the name-related questions focused on individual's perceptions of the difficulty of their names and what problems they experienced; whether their names had undergone change while in Japan; their use of Japanese or *katakana* names; and how they introduced their names.[35] In framing how they are discussed, I specifically considered these specific questions:

> 1. How actively do foreigners living in Japan adapt their names, and how do they approach adopting Japanese names?

> 2. What kind of difficulties do they experience with how their names are treated, and how do they respond to those problems?

To consider how background differences affect naming patterns, I also looked at how individuals from English speaking countries (the U.S., Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, Ireland and New Zealand) and Chinese language (Cantonese, Mandarin, Taiwanese, etc.) speaking countries (China, Hong Kong and Taiwan) differed. Although it would have been ideal to look at individual countries, given the sample size it was deemed impractical. However, by comparing these two groups, which make up the majority of participants (78.46%; Table 1), it is possible to examine how naming strategies differ in *kanji* cultures. Regarding these groups, I also examined an additional question:

> 3. Do the varied possibilities available affect how individuals from English and Chinese areas lead to different naming strategies?

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[35] See Hatano, *Mainoriti No Namae*; Kim, "The Dynamics of Ethnic Name Maintenance and Change"; Wu, "Asian American Naming Preferences and Patterns."

As mentioned previously, note that this article shares its data set with the author's previous 2014 article, which focused on the limited question of whether foreign residents felt Japanese names were accessible to them.[36] By expanding the focus to the specific problems and strategies that foreign residents experience and use, this article therefore offers an updated and deeper exploration of naming issues and practices for amongst foreign residents of Japan.

Results and Discussion
Changes in Names
A small majority of people (76, 55.07%; Table 3) felt that the name they used most commonly in Japan was different from what they used in their home country. Of those 76, only 41 felt that their name changed slightly, suggesting that the changes were not dramatic. The most commonly perceived change was in pronunciation (47), followed by the use of surnames instead of personal names (19) and new nicknames (12). The fact that changes in pronunciation dominate indicates that linguistic issues are the major factor here; however, the use of surnames instead of personal names also points to an adaptation to Japanese practices. Responses suggest that most changes used the respondents' original names as a base, rather than a wholly new name.

The most common motivation behind altering names was to make it easier to remember (36). Relatedly, seven individuals gave discomfort or uncertainty of Japanese people using their name as a reason to change it, suggesting that pragmatic issues are a determining factor. These responses were followed by personal discomfort at one's name being mispronounced (13). Given the frequency of changes in pronunciation, this is unsurprising, but low: this also means that many who reported feeling that their names changed in pronunciation did not do so because it was discomforting to them, a recurrent theme below.

Introductions, Katakana and Japanese Names
To ascertain how actively people adapted the pronunciation of their names, I also asked how participants pronounced their name when introducing themselves to Japanese people, to which 71 (51.45%) said they

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[36] Unser-Schutz, "The Use and Non-Use of Japanese Names."

only introduced themselves using Japanese pronunciations (e.g., [kɯɾisɯtaɾɯ] over /krɪstəl/; Figure 2).

Changes in names occurred	Number of participants
No	62
Somewhat	41
Yes	35
Changes in names	
Altered pronunciation	47
Surname instead of personal name	19
A nick-name not used previously	12
Personal name instead of surname	6
Changed name in marriage	4
Dropped middle name	1
Japanese middle name	1
Shortened name	1
-San suffix	1
Reasons for changes	
To make it easier for Japanese people to remember	36
Discomfort or annoyance at name being mispronounced	13
Japanese people seemed uncomfortable using name used at home	7
Automatically changed due to differences in language	4
Changed due to Japanese name practices (surname)	3
Made it easier for Japanese people to pronounce correctly	2
Cultural differences in name practices caused confusion	2
Other	7

Table 3. Number of respondents who felt there was a change in their names and the perceived changes and reasons for them (multiple answers possible)[37]

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[37] Adapted from Unser-Schutz, "The Use and Non-Use of Japanese Names."

As shown in the figure below, only 21 (15.22%) did not offer a Japanese-pronunciation of their name. Combined with those who gave the original pronunciation after saying it in Japanese (8) and those who gave a Japanese pronunciation after saying it in its original pronunciation (29), the majority of people (78.28%) actively gave a Japanese-friendly version (nine did not respond or supplied other answers). Chinese-speakers were significantly more likely to introduce themselves by prioritizing the katakana version, with 78.57% having reported giving their name's Japanese pronunciation only or before giving the pronunciation in its original form, compared with 53.73% of English-speakers (2 (1, 95) = 4.13, p = .042*).
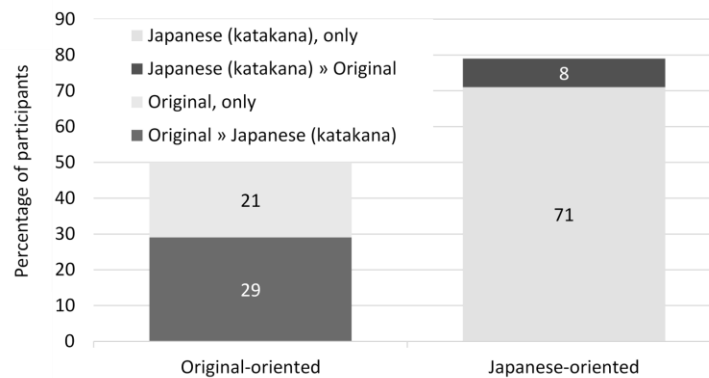

Figure 2. Differences in ways to introduce oneself, between original- and Japanese-oriented versions[38]

On the other hand, 25.68% of English-speakers reported that they only gave the Japanese version after saying it in its original form, compared with 3.57% of Chinese-speakers. One Chinese-speaker noted that because he usually used the Japanese reading of his name, Kō, he felt strange when some Japanese speakers would call him Fan, which is phonetically closer to his Chinese name (Huang), showing the normalcy of using the Japanese readings of *kanji* names (all names have been changed for privacy). The majority (84.78%) stated that they had a consistent way of writing their name in *katakana* (Table 4). These results seem to suggest that most individuals are

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[38] Adapted from Unser-Schutz, "The use and Non-Use of Japanese Names."

in control of how they present their names. However, while it was most common to select a *katakana* version on one's own (38), it was almost equally common to have it assigned by one's Japanese teacher (37), with help from a friend (24) also common.

This may reflect the fact that *katakana* versions are often decided at an early time in one's stay, as it is necessary to open bank accounts or apply for health insurance; hence the six people reporting that their bank or city hall chose it. Once it is chosen, it sets a precedent for how the name will be written: Even if they later realize that it is not ideal, it is no longer easily changed. Thus, while foreigners may quickly adapt to a *katakana* version, they may not always play an active part in how they are used or selected; nor does everyone find it desirable to do so. For some, the necessity of a *katakana* name can be construed as forced acculturation: as Jamie, a 65-year old Canadian long-term resident noted, "I only have problems to write my name... [a katakana version] is completely outside my identity as me and gave me a lot of culture shock in the beginning. i (sic) am still happier if someone else will write it and have not bothered/tried to learn the katakana of my name. It (sic) is not me."

Consistent katakana form used	Number of participants
<u>No</u>	20
<u>N/A</u>	1
<u>Yes</u>	117
Chosen by individual	38
Japanese teacher chose it	37
Japanese friend helped	24
Bank/employer/city hall chose it	6
Standard way to write name in katakana	4
Bilingual (non-Japanese) friend helped decide	2
Other/NA	6

**Table 4. How many participants used consistent katakana forms
and how they chose them**

Consistent *katakana* names are also not uncontested. A 25-year old American long-term resident, Erica, notes that as a child in Japan, she wrote her name using 'ヴィ', a katakana way of expressing /vi/ only used in loan words because her surname includes the sound /v/, which is not in Japanese. However, as an adult many people tried to correct her with 'ビ' /bi/, which follows Japanese phonology, forcing her to respond by "...nod(ding) politely at my sensei's [teacher's] disapproval." Choosing a *katakana* form can thus be an assertion of autonomy, which may need protecting from other people's sense of authority of how *katakana* should be used. Indeed, one must juggle a variety of different factors to settle upon a good form. A long term 39-year old resident, Lette, notes that although her name is easy in her native Denmark, written in *katakana,* it sounds like a boys' name in Danish. Thus, for her own comfort, she chose a katakana form close to her name in English, completing two changes: Danish to English, English to *katakana*.

Have a Japanese personal name	Number of participants
<u>No</u>	115
<u>N/A</u>	2
<u>Yes</u>	21
Chosen by individual	8
Japanese teacher helped	7
A relative chose it	2
Similarity in pronunciation	2
Other	2

**Table 5. How many participants used Japanese personal names
and how they chose them**

In comparison, only 21 people (15.22%) selected a Japanese (personal) name (Table 5). Like *katakana* versions of names, the most common ways to select Japanese names were to choose a name that one liked or with help from a Japanese teacher. No one noted friends helping, hinting that it may not be common for Japanese people to suggest Japanese names to foreigners. It should be noted that I specifically did not ask about surnames. Because surnames act as symbols of family relationships and often change through marriage, they are less likely to be altered as freely and informally as personal names. In regards to this, 49 respondents (35.51%) were married

or in a relationship with a Japanese partner; in particular, 31.76% of female respondents – who would be more likely to experience a surname change through marriage given cultural practices – reported being in a relationship with a Japanese partner (this was somewhat lower than men: 41.51%).

Half of those who took Japanese names were Chinese speakers, suggesting they are more willing to do so. Chinese-speaking respondents perceived their names to be different more than English-speaking respondents did (64.29% vs. 45.95%); however, this was not significant (χ^2(1, 102) = 2.05, p > .1). They *did* seem to actively change their names more commonly, as far as pronunciation is concerned. While most (24/28) *only* gave Japanese readings of kanji, this was not necessarily perceived as a change: nine who said there were no changes introduced their names using the Japanese readings, which seems consistent with Heffernan's report on Chinese speakers in Canada showing that English names were chosen for reasons beyond their original name being too difficult.[39]

Difficulty of Names and Experiences of Discomfort

There were no clear trends in regards to people's assessment of the difficulty of their names. On a scale of one to five, with one being low in difficulty and five being high, participants' average self-reported personal perception of the difficulty of their personal names came to 2.83 points (SD = 4.56); surnames scored similarly at 3.10 points (SD = 3.56), suggesting that most respondents did not feel that their names were especially easy or difficult in general. Not surprisingly, on a scale of one (never experience difficulty) to five (experience difficulty all the time), the average frequency of respondents' perceived difficulty of their names for Japanese people came to 2.87 (SD = 7.64). There was a gap between people's evaluations of the difficulty of their name's pronunciation and their perception that Japanese people have difficulty with their names (Figure 3): Whereas 48 people (34.78%) thought that their personal name was very or extremely difficult, and 61 (44.20%) thought their surname was, only 43 (31.16%) reported feeling that Japanese people had problems with their name often or all the time. When people perceived difficulties, it was usually related to pronunciation issues (67) and that Japanese people seemed uncertain that they were getting it correct (52) (see Table 6), both likely related to the common feeling that one's name had changed in pronunciation. Although there were no statistical differences for the sense of change or discomfort

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[39] Kevin Heffernan, "English Name Use," 32–33.

amongst people from English-speaking and Chinese-speaking countries, the English-speaking group may be somewhat more likely to experience difficulty (trending at $t(99) = 1.922$, $p = .0575$).
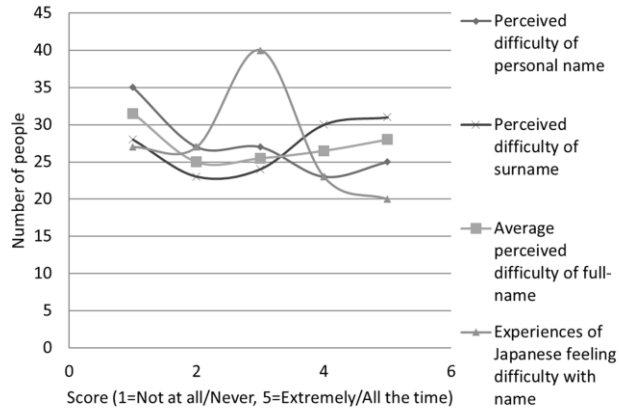

Figure 3. Perceived difficulty in names and experiences of Japanese feeling difficulty

Causes of difficulty	Number of participants	Weighted score (sum of all scores on 1~5 scale)	Average score (weighted score/number of participants)
Difficult to pronounce	67	245	3.66
Uncertain about its being correct	52	182	3.5
Difficulty distinguishing between personal and surnames	27	104	3.85
Too long to remember	20	70	3.5
Difficulty distinguishing gender	11	38	3.46
Name reminds people of other words	2	7	3.5
Inconsistent in variety	2	7	3.5
Personal/surnames differ in difficulty	2	5	2.5
Other	4	12	3

Table 6. Perceived causes of Japanese people's difficulty with foreigners' names

That Japanese people experience difficulties with their names does not appear to necessarily cause foreign residents discomfort. On a score of 1 (none) to 5 (always), the average came to just 1.72, with most (80 people, 57.97%) never experiencing discomfort (Table 7); only 12 people (8.70%) reported experiencing discomfort frequently. Consistent with previous results, the most common reason for feeling discomfort was mispronunciations; the fourth most common reason, that one's name was improperly remembered, may be related to this. Given the low scores for discomfort, it seems safe to say that having one's name mispronounced is not a major cause for concern *per se*. As Rene, a 41-year old female long-term resident from New Zealand comments, "(a)lthough it's an annoyance because it's ongoing, I don't blame people for not being able to pronounce my name... It only bothers me if people blame me for having such a name!" Conversely, the use of non-approved or disliked nicknames were common reasons for discomfort (10), hinting at respondents' desire to maintain their autonomy over their names: having one's name mispronounced may be inevitable but not usually malicious, whereas others actively changing one's name is a greater threat to one's ability to choose how they present themselves to others. However, given that the most common response in dealing with these issues was to repeat one's name (27), and the second most common to do nothing, this may not always be actively defended.

Interestingly, the second most common reason was personal names used instead of surnames, in line with Maeda's argument that Japanese people overuse personal names with foreigners. [40] In the free response section, several respondents specifically mentioned this as an issue. Sometimes, people specifically encouraged using personal names: Elizabeth, a 50-year old long-term British resident notes that, particularly before taking her husband's Japanese surname, she liked to use her personal name because it was "easier." However, it is not always so simple. Shirley, a 41-year old long-term Canadian resident, noted that while she prefers her personal name, "I know that some foreign people do not like to be called by their first names in situations where Japanese people would use last names." In regards to foreigners married to Japanese partners, she specifically noted "…that there is sometimes a hesitancy to call foreign spouses by their new Japanese surname (e.g. calling a foreign wife of a Japanese man 'Suzuki-san'), so they

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[40] Maeda, "How the Japanese Address and Refer to Non-Japanese," 140–141.

will sometimes be called by their first names instead," intimating that Japanese names are apparently not seen as fitting for non-Japanese.

Experiences of discomfort	Number of participants
Scaled responses	
1 (never experience discomfort)	80
2	32
3	13
4	7
5 (experience discomfort all the time)	5
N/A	1
Reasons for discomfort (responses to scales 2~5)	
Mispronunciations	30
Use of personal name over surname	11
Non-approved/disliked nickname	10
Improperly remembered	10
Use of surname over personal name	5
Jokes about name	2
Use/non-use of middle names	2
Other	7
Strategies for dealing with discomfort (responses to scales 2~5)	
Tell them again	22
Nothing	20
Give them a nickname	7
Encourage use of a particular name	3
Other	4

Table 7. Experiences and strategies for dealing with discomfort

Indeed, the belief that Japanese names are for Japanese people only can inappropriately set expectations of Japanese identity. Elizabeth further commented that although some people seem to find it difficult to use her

Japanese surname received through marriage, using it generally made things easier. Yet this could sometimes be problematic as "...it does generally raise their expectations as to my language ability!": a Japanese name means being Japanese, which therefore also means speaking Japanese. Even people born with Japanese names, such as many *nikkei*, may seek to avoid their use for this very reason. Indeed, one 30-year old South American respondent, Eric, noted that he preferred using his personal name rather than his Japanese surname because he "(doesn't) want people to mistake (him) for a Japanese person." One can read from Eric's comment a sense that that taking a Japanese identity means one is only Japanese, and does not allow individuals to have a more mixed or hybrid identity, an issue Kamada explores in detail in her discussion on *hāfu* or mixed-race children living in Japan.[41]

Of course, foreigners are not always being intentionally or consciously treated differently. One respondent, Alexis, a long-term 39-year old Canadian resident, had a telling story. Although she used to experience difficulties when her personal or middle name – or both – would be called out at office settings, confusing her because she anticipated being called by her surname, these problems went away when she married her Japanese partner and took his name. At least in some cases like Alexis's, overusing personal names may be caused by a lack of familiarity with non-Japanese names, making it difficult to determine which is which, similar to Hatano's findings concerning the misregistration of Brazilian and Peruvian students' names in school documents.[42] Similarly, Vicky, a long-term 32-year old American-Chinese resident, married with children to a Japanese man, noted the discrepancy between how she and other mothers are referred to. While most are referred to as *Tomoko no mama* 'Tomoko's mom', she alone is usually referred to by her personal name. Yet it is not Vicky who is offended by this practice, but her mother-in-law, who does not like that other people refer to her in a way that would – by Japanese norms – be considered inappropriate. Their personal relationship may be influential in her mother-in-law's feelings: as opposed to the limited public interactions people have with bank tellers or other children's mothers, being invested in long time, familial relationships likely encourages people to be more conscious of these differences and how they affect others.

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[41] Laurel Kamada, *Hybrid Identities and Adolescent Girls: Being 'Half' in Japan* (Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters, 2009). 6–8.
[42] Hatano, Mainoriti No Namae, 124.

Like Vicky's mother-in-law, many respondents reported finding the use of their personal name inappropriate because it goes against the local rules, meaning that they are not being treated in the same way as Japanese people would expect to be. This was a particularly common reaction to the use of *yobisute* (using someone's name without an honorific), which several participants specifically noted frustration with:

> I'm not bothered by people addressing me by my first name with no title or honorific on a person to person basis, but it bothers me when it's done systematically, or if I'm the only one in a group addressed that way... *Rene, 41, female, New Zealand*

> *Yobisute* only bothers me when it's inappropriate... I think names should be used in a culturally appropriate way. To not do so sets foreigners apart, and is racist, regardless of good intentions. *Melanie, 39, female, Canada*

> Two things that really bother me are the automatic presumption that because I'm a foreigner of European descent: a) It's OK to address me by my first name, and b) It's OK not to use an honorific with my name... In Japan, such familiarity is almost a sign of contempt. Regardless, they seem to think that the rules do not apply to "others,"... *Benjamin, 38, male, Canada*

Clearly, *yobisute* itself is not viewed negatively. The problem – as with personal names – is when it unilaterally goes against local norms, making non-Japanese residents' position as "others" stand out. As a foreigner, standing out may be somewhat inevitable; given that many people do not feel that Japanese names are actively available to them, or desire them in the first place, having an obviously non-Japanese name contributes to that. However, standing out because one's name is different and standing out because one is being subject to different norms are two different proverbial fish; the results here suggest that although the former is of no great concern, the latter is.

Conclusion

In reviewing the results, the answer to the first question – how actively do foreigners living in Japan adapt their names, and how do they approach adopting Japanese names? – It appears to be that foreigners do actively make adaptations to their names while living in Japan. However, the changes reported were relatively minor, e.g., related to pronunciation rather than the adoption of a fully new name; compared with many of the reports on name changes amongst immigrants in the U.S. and Canada, very few of the respondents took Japanese names. On the other hand, the answer to the second question – what kind of difficulties do they experience with how their names are treated, and how do they respond to those problems? – appears to be that while name problems are frequent, they do not necessarily cause negative feelings. Although it is tempting to frame name changes negatively (a somewhat necessary evil brought through pressure to assimilate) in reality such changes are multifaceted. As Kim showed with Koreans students in Toronto, students were not always pressured to take English names, but did so as part of their active identity negotiations, making it a potentially positive way of forging local ties.[43] Similarly, the fact that most people did not feel strong discomfort because of problems they experienced with their names may mean that issues with names are taken as part of the larger changes that one naturally experiences when moving to a new society.

Take the fact that the second most common change was the use of one's surname over one's personal name (19): only five people felt discomfort because their surnames were used, suggesting that the majority were not offended. Instead, this can be interpreted as a relatively minimal adjustment to local naming practices, and thus small enough to avoid discomfort. More importantly, there may also be mechanisms at work which help foreigners express autonomy over their identity. The use of a consistent *katakana* form and the preference towards introducing oneself using Japanese pronunciations both show how foreigners can control how they are presented. While a *katakana* form may be necessary in Japanese life, precisely because it is an informal requirement, there is no reason why it not remain *ad hoc*. However, by choosing one form, and voluntarily using it, some foreigners may find that they are able to proactively adapt, and thus control, how they are referred to in everyday life.

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[43] Kim, "The Dynamics of Ethnic Name Maintenance and Change," 128–130.

At the same time, the fact that most people did not take a Japanese personal name but rather took other approaches (altered pronunciation, nicknames) is also important. Although adaptation may be a part of negotiating one's identity, not all strategies are perceived as being available to all people. Indeed, their availability appears to change by the status and treatment of new comers in their host countries. As mentioned, Wu showed Chinese-Americans previously used Anglo names more in order to assimilate, with the trend of using Chinese names only recently spreading.[44] She associated this with the diversification of the U.S., meaning that the two strategies (taking an Anglo name or using one's ethnic name) swayed between other variables. In the case of Japan, assimilation does not appear to be an option, and it may be that the participants do not feel comfortable using Japanese names because of its strong association with a Japanese identity.

It is clear that the strategies people take depends partially on their backgrounds. Individuals from Chinese-speaking areas appeared more open to taking Japanese names, and used the Japanese readings of their *kanji* names more actively than people from English speaking areas. They also appeared to be less likely to register such usages as changes. As I have noted elsewhere, there may be several reasons for this.[45] First, individuals from Chinese speaking countries may be generally more willing to make such adaptations. Indeed, it is common in Taiwan, China and Hong Kong to have English nicknames, suggesting that they may be less hesitant to take on other names. The social and cultural importance given to *kanji* may offer *kanji* names a privileged space, allowing people to feel that their name has not changed so long as they use kanji. While there is a tendency to speak about "Chinese," China is a multilingual country with many different languages (such as Mandarin, Cantonese, and Shanghainese). Within that context, *kanji* are often perceived as playing a unique role in creating a sense of Chinese identity by uniting the different languages or dialects[46], which may contribute to the low concern about pronunciation.

Given the long history of immigration from Taiwan, China and Hong Kong, it may be that there are established community practices in

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[44] Wu, "Asian American Naming Preferences and Patterns," 36–41.

[45] Unser-Schutz, "The Use and Non-Use of Japanese Names."

[46] Richard Oliver Collin, "Revolutionary Scripts: The Politics of Writing Systems," in Michael A. Morris, ed., *Culture and Language* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 29–68.

regards to dealing with names. In examining how Chinese-speaking students of English as a second language in the UK selected English names, Edwards makes the observation that they may not be open to adopting new names simply because their conception of names is different, but rather because it can offer practical yet subtle solutions to more complicated problems, such as how to maintain appropriate distance.[47] By taking an English personal name, for example, Chinese speakers can avoid using their Chinese personal names when it would not be normally appropriate in Chinese-speaking situations, such as with teachers; thus, while they are superficially complying with English norms, it can also be construed as a form of resistance that protects Chinese norms. Although the use of personal names is not as relevant in Japanese, it is also possible that the adaptation of Japanese names amongst Chinese speakers is masking other pragmatic practices.

In comparison, while England and Ireland had large emigrant communities in the past, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. have been largely a place for immigrants to *come to*, rather than emigrate out of. This suggests that there may be fewer community practices in terms of adapting names. As noted above, the new tendency in the U.S. to be more accepting of ethnic names may also lead some Americans to feel reluctant to adapt their names. Thinking of Edwards's analysis, one might suggest that the reluctance to use a Japanese name is one form of resisting the larger pressures to conform and adapt to Japanese society. Ethnic issues may also be at play: as the typical idea of a "foreigner" in Japan is of a Caucasian individual, the expectations for non-Asian individuals to have non-Japanese names may also be stronger than for Asian individuals from Chinese speaking countries. Avoiding a Japanese name – even when it is one's legal name – may be one way to shoot down unwanted conversations. These possibilities all point to the need to look at changes amongst foreigners from multiple sides: both from the position of the policies within their host countries, but also from their own cultural backgrounds.

As a preliminary exploration, there are naturally some limits to the current study. In particular, the sample was small, with slightly more women. Although the average length of time in Japan was not inconsiderable, with the mode at two years, the majority had been in Japan for a relatively short

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[47] Rachel Edwards, "What's in a name? Chinese Learners and the Practice of Adopting 'English' Names," *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 19/1 (2006): 90–103.

period of time, which may influence individuals' desire to adapt their names. In addition, while ethnicity and country of origin appear to have been factors affecting respondents' inclinations to change their names, the sample was skewed in terms of the countries represented, and a more balanced sample would be desirable. Further research is necessary, and there is good reason to believe that how foreign residents in Japan adapt their names will be a point of contention in the future. Looking ahead, there is a distinct possibility that the practices described here are in transition, and the situation may drastically change soon.

As the data presented here was taken before the My Number system was introduced, none of the individuals had to formally register a *katakana* version of their name. With the My Number system, all foreigners will have a *katakana* version. Since people's identification numbers will be linked with their bank accounts as part of the new system, the name registered in My Number may well supplant other opportunities to create *katakana* names. Because the paperwork will be conducted at the city office wherein a recent arrival would register their domicile, it is likely that civil servants will have a more influential role in the creation of *katakana* names for new residents.

While this may mean more consistency in the *katakana* forms used, it may also mean that they will less accurately reflect names' pronunciations, since many new comers will register their names when they are not sufficiently competent in Japanese to negotiate more accurate versions. With the birth of the My Number system, long-term residents also had to register a *katakana* version of their name, of which suggestions were sent out by local city offices for confirmation: unlucky, too, were people who did not know how to read *katakana*, as their confirmation would not have been helpful. This added level of bureaucratic control in how names are registered suggests there will be an impact on how foreign residents perceive not only their names themselves, but also how they are positioned in Japan. This question of foreign residents' autonomy and control over their identity is one that will likely become more important in the future.